



200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
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State Superintendent of Schools

# HOMELESS EDUCATION

Fact Sheet  
**22**

*Revised October 2004*

## ***What is the Homeless Education Program?***

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program began in 1987 as Title VII, Subtitle B of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Last amended in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Act, it is cited as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2001.

The purpose of the program is to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public pre-school education, provided to other children and youth. State and local school systems are required to develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth and provide them with opportunities to meet the same challenging State content and State student performance standards to which all students are held.

## ***How is the program funded?***

The Maryland State Department of Education distributes funds through a competitive grant process. Under McKinney-Vento, local school systems may be granted funds to provide programs for homeless children and youth. These programs have considerable flexibility and may use their funds to provide enriched supplemental instruction, transportation, professional development, and referral to health care and other services facilitating the enrollment and success in school of homeless children and youth.

## ***What options are available to homeless children for school selection?***

When school age children become homeless or move among shelters, the McKinney-Vento Act provides homeless parents and students with options for school selection:

- Homeless children may continue at the “school of origin” for the entire time they are homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they move into permanent housing.
- Homeless children can transfer to the school nearest the temporary shelter or the school in which non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless student is living are eligible to attend.
- Homeless students may be sent to a school other than that requested by a parent or guardian. The school system must provide a written explanation to the parent or guardian of its decision and the right to appeal if the parent’s or guardian’s request is denied.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires school systems to base school placement decisions on the “best interest” of the child. Best interest means that a local education agency must keep students in homeless situations in their school of origin to the extent feasible, unless it is against the parents or guardians wishes. The determination of what is in the best interest of the child must be made on a case-by-case basis.

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***What options  
are available...  
(continued)***

Feasible considerations include: (a) student's age, (b) the school which the student's siblings attend, (c) the student's experiences at the school of origin, (d) the student's academic needs, (e) the student's emotional needs, (f) any other special needs of the family, (g) continuity of instruction, (h) length of stay in the shelter, (i) the likely location of the family's future permanent housing, (j) time remaining in the school year, (k) the safety of the child, and (l) distance of commute and the impact it may have on the student's education and other student-centered, transportation-related factors.

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***What rights do  
parents have in  
school placement?***

To the extent feasible, a local school system shall comply with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school placement. The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the parent(s) or is temporarily placed elsewhere by the parent(s).

Local school systems should work with shelters and other service providers to place families with children in residential facilities near transportation services or schools determined to be in the best interest of the child.

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***What services  
are available  
to homeless  
children?***

Homeless children and youth receive the same services as non-homeless children and should be referred to health care, dental care, mental health services, and other services as appropriate.

All local school systems must provide services to each homeless child and youth in the local school system that are comparable to services offered to other students in the school and determined to be in a student's best interest. These services include public preschool programs, educational programs or services for which the homeless student meets the eligible criteria, programs in career and technology education, programs for gifted and talented students, before and after school programs, school meal programs, and transportation.

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***What transportation  
services are available  
to homeless children?***

Children who are homeless have the same right to school bus transportation as all other children. If a child changes schools, it may affect the child's transportation. The school should take any steps necessary to assure that a child is not denied access to an education due to a lack of transportation.

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***How can I learn  
more about policies  
protecting homeless  
children?***

The Maryland State Department of Education has developed guidelines to help local school systems and schools in providing programs for homeless children and youth. The guidelines also describe the rights and responsibilities of parents in selecting and placing their children in school. For more information, see COMAR 13A.05.09 Programs for Homeless Children.

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For more information, call the Homeless Education Specialist, Division of Student and School Services, at 410-767-0293, the public information line at 410-767-0600 (Baltimore area) or 1-888-246-0016 (toll free) or visit our website at [marylandpublicschools.org](http://marylandpublicschools.org)

Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

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